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Universal free trade as remedy against war...

[Rotterdam]

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War Paper.

Universal Free Trade as Remedy against War and the Murder of Princes.

It is well known to you that I have devoted half a century of my life to trade and industry; and you also know that I have done it with diligence, with success, and on a big scale.

My travels have included not only Germany, England and France, but also Portugal, India and America. I have been in touch with high and low, with the great and also with the so-called "submerged", with workmen as well as with masters.

I have not taken part in politics; I have regarded all with the inherited eye of a merchant.

Everywhere I found discontent. Everyone undervalued his means of existence, in comparison with his desires. There was no want of bread, but man cannot live by bread alone. It is the satisfaction of the daily returning

"little wishes", which creates what one commonly calls content and happiness.

The mind enjoys the value of a good cigar, a good cup of coffee or tea, an elegant piece of furniture, a cosy chair, a soft cushion. Let me sum up: The happiness of life consists of the satisfaction of little wishes in luxury. The woman wishes to be not only warmly, but also beautifully dressed, — she covets not only necessities, but also extravagance. She wants to shine; she wants pearls and diamonds, she wants silks and furs and perfumes and colours and beauty, in order to outshine others, and to conquer.

I found discontent everywhere, because the vast majority had not that which ought to produce their daily happiness and the happiness of the personality to whom they are bound by a short-lived union of a looser or tighter nature.

The articles desired were too dear in comparison with their means, and those things which were not dear, were thought bad. I found these articles taxed everywhere. There were import-duties, which raised the prices and made the goods accessible only to the rich. Those who could not enjoy them were bitter against the Government, against the duties and against the rich. And as the vast majority of people have no knowledge of the machinery of government, I heard everywhere angry words against the statesmen, whom they regarded as almighty "bosses" and bad organizers. Those who joined gentleness to ignorance called them useless ornaments, and those who would apologize spoke of "high trees which catch the high winds."

Many of the grievances, I remarked, proceeded from the restriction on traffic, from the import-duties. In the countries of export people complained because they made supplies small and difficult; in the countries of import because they raised the prices, as there not only had the import-duties to be paid, but also the salaries of the collectors, the custom-officers and the clerks, who together form a considerable army of labour, which could be employed more profitably.

Those in favour of the import-duties, whom I always opposed vigourously, constantly cast it in my teeth that the State is perfectly entitled to take something from the luxury, the abundance, the unnecessary, that the rich allow themselves. And the stupid asserted that by the import-duties a state draws something from foreign countries and protects the home production. I will not here set forth what I put forward against this all. I will only say that I have become a convinced free trader in the course of my travels and of my business, so convinced that I attribute all wars and all regicides, directly or indirectly, to obstruction of commerce between nations.

Were it possible, that one single power could make itself master of the globe, there would be no more frontiers, and therefore no more duties, and consequently no wars.

What is the enlargement of territory, which is so readily called expansion, but the struggle for the effacement of frontiers, for the widening of the circle in which one enjoys freedom of commerce?

The restriction of commerce is the cause of wars, of anarchy, and of murder of princes.

During my whole life the news of the day has been war-news, but I am happy to say, that the sounds of savagery have always remained far from my abode.

I had scarcely arrived at self-consciousness, when I already heard of the trade and ever increasing expansion of Russia, of the Mediteranean Sea, Sardinia, France, England and the Crimea. The names of Lord RAGLAN, of the Generals CANROBERT and PÉLISSIER, of the Malakoff-tower and the battle-field of Balaclava are still ringing in my ears. The Crimean war lasted from my tenth to my fourteenth year. Then followed the opium war of England against China, which was frankly a war for the right of importation. England wanted the free import of poison into another man's beloved country.

I had in those days no time to be uneasy about the issues, results and consequences. In my fourteenth year Sardinia fought against Austria, again for expansion; Solferino and Magenta are clearly fixed in my memory. In Italy the small states, with their import duties, had to disappear. The last conquest was the Papal State, after people had sung "Death to Garibaldi".

I was eighteen in the year that the Civil War broke out in North America. It was fought for the abolition of slavery and for expansion; the Southern States were not allowed to consider themselves any longer as separate countries.

This lasted four years. In the meantime, in my 20th year, the French went, or rather were taken to Mexico, who did not pay her foreign debts. The Mexicans were allowed to choose Maximilian of Austria for their emperor, and to shoot him in '67. For there were stirring events

in Europe: Prussia and Austria had in '64 declared war on Denmark for the sake of the German Confederation; they had assaulted the Bulwarks of Duppel, and Prussia had occupied Sleswick, Austria Holstein.

It was not easy to come to a settlement. Austria demanded an arbitrating verdict of the German Confederation, upon which Prussia in 1866 broke up the Confederation, occupied Hanover and Hesse with "monkey-like" quickness, invaded Bohemia, defeated the Austrians at Königgrätz, made peace at Prague, obtained Sleswick, Holstein, Nassau and Frankfort, and so effaced many frontiers within the North German Confederation. Many duties, coins and stamps disappeared. Bismarck had set his course for the unity of Germany, for the German Empire; frontiers with duties must disappear, although Bismarck himself was a defender of duties and of protection. Only the small states must give up such rights and protection. In 1870 — I was then 27 — the bomb burst, which we then regarded as the biggest possible. Near Gravelotte, in the evening, 40,000 bodies lay on the battle field.

It was a time of excitement. I may also say of "war profits". It was as if people lived on tobacco in war time and kept up their courage with coffee. The duties due to Germany lapsed for Alsace, Lorraine and all the South German states. All Germans got the same measures, coins, weights, obligations, duties and rights and, except Bavaria, also the same stamps.

Communication became much easier. From then I was so busy that the years flew quickly by and I paid so little attention to their number that I have not

remembered them. In Spain the Carlists were fighting, in the East the Russians were fighting against the Turks, who wished Servia, Roumania, Montenegro and Bulgaria to become independent. After that the English fought against the Zulus, Caffers and Boers in South Africa, against the Egyptians under Arabi-pasha in North Africa, against the Soudanese under the Mahdi, in India, against the Afghans.

We had been fighting in Atjeh since 1870, we were fighting against Lombok. Spain had continually to send armies to her colonies, till America defeated Spain, conquered a part of their colonies and bought the rest.

England continually enlarged her dominions; she subdued the Boer Republic. She has the goodwill of all conquered states, because she carried on Free Trade, promoted free commerce and equality, introduced brotherhood and a wise self-government everywhere where it was possible. About the twentieth century I need not speak, the youngest of us remembers the Russian-Japanese war, followed by action against China by all the European powers, when a German commander-in-chief became field-marshal, but was in jest called "World"-marshal. It seemed to me at the time a glorious omen that the French and English allowed themselves to be commanded by a German. It was later a cause of secret envy and anger. I will also be silent about the Mexican position and the Balkan-wars. You have lived through them as well as I. In principle they all proceeded from want of free trade, which want embittered neighbours against each other, produced smuggling and made the smuggler first an enemy to the custom-officers, and then an

enemy to his country and his king. Is it not remarkable that everywhere, except in free-trading England the proletariat and the socialist are anti monarchal? Ignorance and bitterness against the authorities, especially against the statesman, produced anarchism. And together custom-duties, socialism, anarchism and ignorance led to war and the murder of princes. When I hear expansion spoken of, I always understand that extension of the free circle is meant. Socialism means to me only the struggle for the improvement of the means of existence, which are impeded by the limits of free-trade.

And the anarchist wants to do away with God and Master, so that all can become renewed in "freedom". Freedom, freedom, that is the great and general desire; freedom of trade and profession, freedom to settle, freedom of supply and demand. Radicals themselves desire freedom of union or free love, and say poetically that the children of love are stronger and better than the children of duty. It is my life's experience and conviction that the peace of the world must be founded on the world's free trade, on free communication in its broadest sense. If freedom does not come the lives of the children born to day will be as full of wars and murders of princes as mine.

Surely, only the ignorant and those embittered by missing happiness sharpen the dagger against the wealthy, and in the first place against the man whom they regard as the wealthiest, and the head of the wealthy, against "the monarch".

In my time I have seen the head of many a Statesman fall by the murderer's hand. "Seen" in its figurative

sense I saw the event in papers and illustrations. The dates escape me: three presidents of the United States were struck by dagger or bullet: ABRAHAM LINCOLN (1875), JAMES GARFIELD (1881) and MAC KINLEY. President CARNOT in France, Dom LOUIS, King of Portugal and at the same time his eldest son; an attempt was made on the king of Spain the day of his wedding. King HUMBERT of Italy was stabbed to death in his carriage; King ALEXANDER of Servia and Queen DRAGA were murdered in their bedroom and the bodies thrown out of the window; Czar ALEXANDER of Russia was blown nearly to pieces by a bomb. The Empress ELIZABETH of Austria was stabbed to the heart with a rusty file; King GEORGE of Greece was murdered during the Balkan war; King WILLIAM of Prussia was seriously wounded by NOBEL; the murderer had no chance on BISMARCK, because the chancellor himself seized him; the reigning Manchu family in China was kidnapped so that one heard no more of it. What was done with the Sultans ABDUL AZIS and ABDUL HAMID has never been fully known. The present war was not caused directly by the murder of the Crown Prince FRANZ FERDINAND, but the murder was the excuse for the war.

As I said before, I have not made politics the subject of my studies. I have undoubtedly passed over names, just as I have not reminded you of the wars and revolutions of South America, which also took place in my lifetime.

After I had entrusted my share in business to younger hands, I have tried to test my experience on "Science"

and "Political Economy". I have procured the best works; in the first place those of Stuart Mill, and I can assure you that they uniformly confirm my experience.

Peace is the most beautiful and the most necessary state of society, and freedom of trade and commerce are the first and strongest basis.

Where freedom of trade and labour exist, princes are allowed to live as necessary centres. During *my* life no attempt has been made on English kings. But in Ireland there was no freedom, and therefore murder of princes was found there; viceroys and high officials were shot down, land-owners boycotted; men committed crimes of all kinds against landlords and rich farmers.

Give Freedom, and you have Peace.

It speaks for itself that I have always been a zealous pacifist. The free trader is naturally that. Still I do not believe in the durability of a peace which does not bring free trade.

When the first Peace conference was sitting in the Hague, I did my best to demonstrate the necessity of the world's free trade. I sent all the gentlemen a finely bound copy of my book "Un pont vers la Paix". The short contents are: Read a good work on Political Economy and put the lessons in practise; then we only want a police army, for nobody wishes to disturb peace. Later I produced several essays and useful details in another book, called "Aza". The word means from A to Z and back again. I could also have called it: The Alpha and Omega of peace conditions. Still I am neither a stylist, a scholar nor an orator. My work is dry, so that very few will have read it, although I have presented

it to every public library in Europe and the United States, in one word, to the five divisions of the world.

I have had no success; people do not read the contemplations of merchants; they read novels and newspapers. But I can witness for myself that I have always given much for peace: work, much work and thousands of guilders.

Perhaps a coming generation will find something good in my work, which recommends free trade to those who wish for the peace of the world. I would also recommend to you, dear readers, to promote and maintain the greatest possible freedom of trade and commerce as a deed of humanity.

That in my life even there has been "progress" I can realize with pleasure; in my young days, import duties were still imposed in many a town. Clergymen were known who smuggled hams, nuns who brought in lace on their bodies, and even ladies who brought home watches on their persons. There were towns where nobody was innocent of the sin of smuggling, and where everyone had to confess that he often gave false witness, and had robbed his parish. The duty on butter declined when industry brought more butter out of the town than into it; the duty was abolished, for it was surpassed by the restitutions.

Progress will continue, although duties seem an easy means to raise the revenue of the state, and to make the poorest contribute something. Should England ever really give up free trade that will be the beginning of the downfall of the British Empire. I dare to predict progress — the example of the towns will be followed

by the countries, which certainly will find the means quite as well as the towns to obtain the money that is necessary. President WILSON has spoken in a speech of a desire for a peoples' union and a powerful army, formed by all mankind.

The most powerful army is Freedom.

N.B. And now I further recommend to you the reading of my recent writings.

H. J. VAN DER LEEUW.

20 February 1917.

D. J. P. STORM LOTZ (H. VAN TRICHT) — ROTTERDAM.

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